

Esta's Page: Design a Maasai Bull Necklace

Kakuta Hamisi says, "Generally speaking, our art is dominated by beadwork.... We believe the world is full of patterns. These are patterns of life, and we present them through ornaments. A lot of jewelry is in the circular form, because we believe the universe is in a circular form." (*Kakuta Hamisi was a Maasai student at Evergreen State College and an intern at the Seattle Museum of Art in 1999. To learn more about the Maasai, see his Web site, www.maasai-infoline.org*)

Beadwork and color symbolism are important to Maasai art. The style of bead and type ornamentation indicate which age set (such as warrior, bride, and elder) a Maasai belongs to.

Colors

The colors used in Maasai beadwork are white, red, green, blue, orange, yellow, and black.

Color rules:

(Example only; color rules vary from one section of Maasai land to another)

Colors that cannot be put next to one another:

Dark blue with black

Yellow next to white

Red next to orange (You have to put a divider of light blue between these two colors.)

Meanings of Colors:

Green represents pastures, vegetation after rainfall, and peace.

Blue represents the sky (and God).

White is milk and other pure things.

Red is blood, especially the blood of cattle, which is mixed with milk for food.

Black is rain.

The beaded collar Esta wears is called a "bull necklace." Use this pattern to design your own bull necklace. Consider the Maasai meanings of colors and the color rules or create your own color rules and follow them. Color your design, then cut out your "necklace," try it on, and see if you look as beautiful as Esta does!

Children Just Like Me
Institute of Texan Cultures
May 27-Sept. 5, 2004



